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TAGS: [NATO](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: DM KAMP INTERVIEW DOES  
NOT REFLECT DUTCH POLICY ON AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: DCM Chat Blakeman, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: Senior Dutch government officials downplayed DM Kamp's April 30 television interview in which he claimed the Netherlands might withdraw its deployment to Afghanistan as part of NATO's ISAF III mission should it become "impossible to fulfill the mission." Dutch officials said Kamp's comments were misconstrued by the Dutch media, and do not/not represent any change in the Dutch commitment to Afghanistan. End summary.

12. (C) Dutch media reported extensively on Kamp's April 30 television interview, in which he noted that the Dutch might choose to withdraw from Uruzgan province should it become "impossible to fulfill the mission." Kamp noted that the Dutch government and parliament would decide in such a case whether it was necessary to withdraw. He added that it was highly improbable, as that also would imply NATO had failed. Kamp said the "number of victims" would not be a reason to withdraw -- "we never speculate on possible victims," Kamp said, and, "we did say that it would be a dangerous mission." At the same time, Kamp expected a "summer from hell" as the Taliban will most certainly test the newly deployed Dutch troops.

13. (C) National Security Advisor Rob Swartbol (please protect) told DCM May 2 that PM Balkenende called Kamp regarding his comments. According to Swartbol, Kamp was trying to evade a difficult question and did not "do a very good job." Swartbol stressed that the Dutch are "obviously not swaying" from their commitment to deploy to Uruzgan province. He said Kamp was displeased by the way the Dutch media "twisted" his words and will make a public statement May 4 to "set the record straight." Swartbol said Balkenende told Kamp to "choose his words more carefully" in the future.

14. (C) Chief of Defense Gen. Dick Berlijn told Ambassador May 2 that Kamp's interview had been misconstrued by the Dutch press. Gen. Berlijn noted that Kamp had stressed during the interview that the Dutch were committed to Afghanistan, and that they would only consider withdrawal if the mission "no longer made sense." He added that Kamp wholeheartedly denied quotes attributed to him that the Dutch would withdraw if the mission became "too dangerous," and confirmed Kamp's willingness to make a public statement on May 4 to "set the record straight."

15. (C) MOD Director of Operations Gen. Eikelboom told DATT

May 2 that Kamp's remarks "caught us all by surprise," and said that his comments were not/not coordinated. Gen. Eikelboom reiterated that the Dutch are "committed for two years" in Uruzgan, but also repeated that it was important that U.S. forces remain at OEF firebases in the north.

¶6. (C) MFA Senior Policy Advisor for Afghanistan Dewi van de Weerd told polmiloff May 2 that Kamp's comments should not be taken at face value. She argued that Kamp was pressed during the interview, and he gave a candid answer. Van de Weerd described press attention to Kamp's comments as overly negative, and that more attention should be paid to Kamp's remarks that a withdrawal was highly improbable. "Kamp was being blunt," she said, "but he also said withdrawal would signify failure for NATO, which he viewed as highly unlikely."

ARNALL